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Illinois State University Symphony Orchestra

Glenn Block Director/Conductor
Illinois State University

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*Illinois State University
School of Music*

*Illinois State University
Symphony Orchestra*

Glenn Block, Music Director and Conductor

Roosevelt Newson, Guest Artist



The Fifth Program of the 2001-2002 Season.

*Braden Auditorium
Sunday Afternoon
September 23, 2001
3:00 p.m.*

Program

Star-Spangled Banner

Francis Scott Key
(1779-1843)

Adagio for Strings, Op. 11(1938)

Samuel Barber
(1910-1981)



*Dedicated to the memory of those victims of the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001.
To be performed without applause, followed by two minutes of silence.*

Fanfare: Short Ride in a Fast Machine (1986)

John Adams
(born 1947)

Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23 (1874)

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso
Andantino semplice
Allegro con fuoco

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

Roosevelt Newson, *piano*

Intermission

Scheherazade: Symphonic Suite, Op. 35 (1888) Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
The Tale of Kalandar Prince
The Young Prince and Princess
Festival in Baghdad and Shipwreck on the Rock with the Bronze Warrior

Brian Gehrick, *violin*

Program Notes

Adams - Short Ride in a Fast Machine

John Adams, American composer and conductor, is one of the most frequently performed living composers of contemporary orchestral music. Adams studied the clarinet with his father and with Felix Viscuglia of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. At the age of 10 he studied theory and composition. He wrote his first piece at 14, performed by the community orchestra, with which he also began his first conducting experiences. As a graduate at Harvard University, he studied composition with Leon Kirchner, (a Schoenberg disciple), Earl Kim, Roger Sessions, Harold Shapero and David Del Tredici.

From 1972 to 1982, Adams taught composition at the San Francisco Conservatory, becoming actively involved in new music, and commissioned and introduced new works of other important experimental composers. In 1978, he collaborated with Edo de Waart, then conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra on their New and Universal Music series of major American and European avant-garde composers. Such initiatives became models for other Meet the Composer programs sponsored by major American orchestras.

As a conductor, Adams has appeared as Artistic Advisor to the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, guest conductor with the London Symphony Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta, the Halle Orchestra, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and others. He has often programmed his works alongside those by composers as diverse as Zappa, Sibelius, Stravinsky, Ives, Copland, Reich and Glass. His major compositions include *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *I was Looking at The Ceiling and Then I Saw The Sky*, Chamber Symphony, Violin Concerto and other choral and orchestral works.

Adams' compositional style evolved quickly, from 12-tone writing into something that is accessible to the ordinary listener without sacrificing his stylistical individuality. He has integrated aspects of popular American culture (film, popular, electronic music, etc.) into his music. Many of his compositions appear to be "minimalistic", a style that was championed by other young American composers in the 1960s. Minimalism is a compositional style in which short musical motifs and rhythmic patterns are repeated to maximum effect in a simple and traditional harmonic idiom. Such "minimalist" composers turned their interest away from constant pitch change and towards the subtleties of intricate rhythmic patterning, from music amorphous of shape to music of discernible processes.

Short Ride in a Fast Machine was written for the Pittsburgh Symphony to celebrate the opening of the Great Woods Summer Festival in Mansfield, Massachusetts. As the title suggests, it is a short work but with an immediate cheerful forward thrust from beginning to end. A wood-block establishes a repetitive pulse color at the beginning of the work and from then on the orchestra unfolds a repetitive rhythmic development with various embellishments through pitch, color, instrumental groups and cross pulsations. Of those who have been categorized as "minimalists," Adams is by far the most anchored in Western classical tradition - multi-tonal centers, fluid tempos and complex formal schemes make his brand of minimalism unique.

Tchaikovsky - Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra

Piotr Tchaikovsky wrote his *Concerto No. 1 for piano and orchestra* in a month's time, from November to December of 1874. Being an almost morbidly self-critical composer and not being a skilled professional pianist, he was anxious to gather another opinion of his *Concerto*. On Christmas Eve, he played his nearly finished piano concerto for his mentor Nikolai Rubinstein, the director of the Moscow Conservatory and the leading Russian pianist-composer, who immediately condemned the *Concerto* as ill-composed and unplayable. Rubinstein further called it imbecilic, infantile, derivative and cheap.

Noting Tchaikovsky's distress, Rubinstein agreed to himself perform the *Concerto* if it was entirely rewritten to his specification. Tchaikovsky was badly hurt. "I shall not alter a single note," he stormed. "I shall publish the work precisely as it is." He erased the intended dedication to Rubinstein and re-inscribed it to the more famous German pianist and conductor, Hans von Bülow, who Tchaikovsky knew was a great admirer of his works. Bülow wrote Tchaikovsky a warm letter praising the originality, nobility and power of the work.

Bülow was leaving for a tour for North America and he gave the *Concerto's* premiere in Boston on October 25, 1875. The American audiences were enthusiastic, and Bülow sent the composer the favorable American press reviews. "Think what healthy appetites these Americans must have. Each time Bülow was obliged to repeat the whole finale of my concerto! Nothing like that happens in our own country." Later Rubinstein recanted his original opinion, and performed the *Concerto* with real verve and gusto, playing it frequently. Today, the Tchaikovsky *Piano Concerto No. 1* remains one of the most popular in the entire repertoire.

Standing outside the nationalist circle of Russian composers centered around Balakirev, Tchaikovsky has been considered to be one of the most important composers of 19th century Russian music. His solid and formal musical training at the St. Petersburg Conservatory allowed him to firmly absorb the European symphonic tradition in a deeply original, personal and national style. Tchaikovsky's influence was profound on the Moscow group of musicians, among them Sergei Rachmaninoff and Igor Stravinsky.

Rimsky-Korsakov - Scheherazade

Born into an aristocratic family, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov was destined to make a career in the Russian Navy, and taking music lessons was merely part of the education. He entered the Naval College in St. Petersburg in 1856 where he made his acquaintance with Balakirev, who encouraged him to write his First Symphony, which he completed during a three-year cruise. The composer prefaced the score to *Scheherazade* with the following notes: "The Sultan Schahriar, convinced of the duplicity and infidelity of all women, vows to slay each of his wives after the first night. The Sultana Scheherazade, however, saved her own life by the recounting to the Sultan a succession of tales over a period of one thousand and one nights. Driven by curiosity, the Sultan put off his wife's execution from day to day. She drew her stories from verses of native poets and folk songs, and she strung her tales one with one other."

There are two main thematic materials that dominate the entire work. The first one is heard at the very beginning of the composition as a series of chords which describes the Sultan. The second theme played by the solo violin, indicates Scheherazade's telling of her tales. These two main subjects can be heard throughout the entire work, representing the two characters and their various feelings and reactions of the tales. At the end of the work, the once powerful, merciless Sultan becomes subdued and less threatening, while Scheherazade, graceful and calm as usual, appears finally again in major tonality, indicating her triumphant victory over the Sultan.

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To Rimsky-Korsakov, however, these subjects meant for him the thematic unity for all the movements. As he says it in his autobiography *My Musical Life*, "...in the majority of cases, all these seeming leit-motifs are nothing but purely musical material or the given motives for symphonic development. These given motives thread and spread over all movements of the Suite, alternating and intertwining with each other. Appearing as they do each time under different illumination, depicting different images, actions and pictures. All I had desired was the hearer, if he liked my piece as symphonic music, should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on the basis of themes common to all four movements.

Therefore, as abstract as music can be, the composer may have already "intertwined" the pure compositional devices with the story in mind. In the case of *Scheherazade*, the musical structure and its program are interwoven into each other in such a coherent way that the work is an example of how perfectly organized a programmatic composition can be written. The orchestral color heard in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* is perhaps the most admired trait of this masterpiece. But Rimsky's choice of an oriental subject, *The Thousand and One Nights* for his symphonic suite, reflects an older and deeper Russian closeness to the Asian culture and the Orient.

Scheherazade was composed in 1888 and was premiered in December of that year with overwhelming success. The enthusiastic St. Petersburg audience was surprised to see the young composer take his bow in a naval uniform. In 1871, Rimsky was appointed professor of composition and instrumentation at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and later published his famous *Principles of Orchestration*. His major students included such figures as Glazunov, Stravinsky and Liadov.

Program Notes by Hua Xu

Illinois State University

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Scott Patka
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Roosevelt Newson, *piano*

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John Koch, *voice*
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Kathleen Randles, *voice*
Michelle Vought, *voice*

Biographical Notes

Roosevelt Newson, the dean of the College of Fine Arts at Illinois State University, is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory, where he studied with Walter Hautzig and Leon Fleisher. Among his orchestra appearances are performances with the York Symphony, Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, Charlotte Symphony, Cleveland Philharmonic, and Baltimore Symphony. In 1978, Newson completed a European tour, which included performances in Salzburg, Vienna, Brussels, The Hague, and London at Wigmore Hall.

The Louisiana-born pianist completed his doctoral studies on a grant from the Ford Foundation. A second grant from the Ford Foundation allowed him to continue his professional studies with Martin Canin at the Juilliard School in New York City.

A veteran of the Affiliate Artists Program in New York, Newson has presented numerous television and radio concerts. recent premieres include Talib Hakim's *A Piano Piece* at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, a commissioned chamber piece by David Ott, which Newson premiered with the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra. Accolades for the latter included: "...went beyond excitement" and "...has literally scored a big win with this concerto." Newson's biography appears in both *Who's Who Among Black Americans* and the *International Who's Who in Music*.

Glenn Block is the Director of Orchestras and Opera and Professor of Conducting at Illinois State University, and also has served as Music Director of the Youth Symphony of Kansas City since 1983. Prior to his appointment at Illinois State in the fall of 1990, Dr. Block served for 15 years as Director of Orchestras and Professor of Conducting at the Conservatory of Music of the University of Missouri - Kansas City and Music Director of the Kansas City Civic Orchestra. Born in Brooklyn, Dr. Block was educated at the Eastman School of Music. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at San Diego.

A frequent guest conductor, he has appeared in over 42 states with all-state and professional orchestras. This season, he will be conducting the all-state orchestras of Wisconsin, Virginia and Maine. Foreign guest conducting have included concerts and master classes at the Fountainebleau Conservatoire in France, Spain, Canada, Colombia, Estonia, Russia, and Italy. In the summer of 2000, Dr. Block and the Youth Symphony of Kansas City toured Italy, and in the summer of 2001, he returned to Italy for six weeks of teaching and conducting at a series of festivals in Florence and Lucca. Dr. Block was invited to be a last-minute substitute conductor with the Sofia, Bulgaria National Philharmonic Orchestra on tour in Italy, which has led to invitations to return to Sofia and guest conducting in Italy in the spring of 2002.

Dr. Block has served on the faculty of the National Music Camp at Interlochen as Resident Conductor of the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, and at the Interlochen Arts Academy as Visiting Conductor. In addition, he has served as Music Director of the Summer Festival Orchestra at the Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado.

Glenn Block is married to Nancy Cochran, Professor of Horn at the University of Missouri - Kansas City, and past President of the International Horn Society. They have three children, all of whom are string players.

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Bass

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